

REMARKS

Claims 1-5, 7-10 and 12 remain pending in this application after this amendment.

Claims 1, 2 and 12 are in independent form.

The Specification has been amended by adding drawing reference numbers that more clearly identify the portions of the prominences. This amendment further demonstrates that the features recited in Claim 3 are duly shown in the drawing. It appears that the Examiner's objection to the drawing resulted from a misunderstanding of the structure recited in Claim 3.

Claim 3, which has been found allowable, has been amended to recite all the limitations of its parent Claims 1 and 2.

Claims 1 and 12 have been amended to recite the slight resiliency of the collar. Support for this amendment is found on page 6, line 13 of the Specification.

Claim 1 also now recites the axially variable resiliency. Support for this added language is found on page 4, lines 6-7 of the Specification.

Claim 12 now recites the axially medial hump of the prominences as described on page 8, line 15 of the Specification.

35 USC 102 Rejection

Independent Claims 1 and 12 now recite features that are not found in Shim, namely, the slight resiliency of the collar, the axially variable resiliency and the medial humps of the projections. The rejection for lack of novelty is no longer applicable.

35 USA 103 Rejection

Besides the fact that Claim 2 incorporates the limitations added to Claim 1, the tapered inner surface is not a simple design consideration within the skill of the art as opined by the Examiner. As explained at page 8, line 14 through page 9, line 2, the tapered surfaces are usefully functional. First, they facilitate insertion of the mating tube. Secondly, they contribute to the axially variable resiliency of the collar.

Applicant submits that these features are sufficiently above the ordinary skill in the art to avoid obviousness.

In view of the above, an early allowance of all the pending Claims is earnestly solicited.

Respectfully submitted,



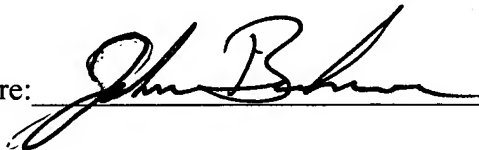
John D. Buchaca
Registration No. 37,289

1545 Hotel Circle South, Suite 150
San Diego, California 92108-3426
Telephone: (619) 294-2922
Fax No. (619) 294-8674

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